From *The Great Gatsby* to the 1920s’ Slangs

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Introduction

In this presentation, I will first give a short introduction about The Great Gatsby, and then, a more detailed explanation about the time background. By introducing the background, the history of the flappers and the slangs in 1920s will be further illustrated.

About *The Great Gatsby*

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925. The story background was mainly set in the summer of 1922, in a fictional village, called West Egg on the Long Island, New York. It is a tragic story describing the moral collapse, and the fall of idealism and American dream. Through the movie trailer played in the presentation, I want to emphasize the glamorous scene and the cheerful atmosphere in that period of time, the 1920s.

The Historical Background of the 1920s

As the WWI had just ended, there was a great amount of men died of the war, the concept of seize the time and enjoy the life were really popular among people. The economic boom also played a key role to shape the society, that in the US, people chased glamorous and luxurious life. Also, in this period of time, women’s social status rose slightly which was already a great improvement. As you can see, in the scene from the trailer, women freely hanging around with men in public, and though not truly equal, the situation for women did change. These liberated women, called “flappers” were thus born and thrived in the 1920s and even 1930’s. They influenced the society greatly and brought the sub culture of flapper to main stream and also coined lots of words and phrases.

Some Interesting Slangs

Bank’s Closed→No kissing Blouse→Go (Let’s blouse. =Let’s go.)

Dud→A wall flower Father Time→Any man over 30 years of age

Goof→Sweetie Handcuff→Engagement ring

Ritz→Stuck-up, proud Tomato→Brainless good looking girl

Bee’s Knees= Cat’s Pajamas→Anything good

The origin of bee’s knees and cat’s pajamas: When bees are collecting pollens, the pollens would stick on their tibias, which look like the knees. Thus, the bee’s knees mean something really good. As for cat’s pajamas, cats were widely used to describe the flappers in 1920s and pajamas was a fashion back then, so cat’s pajamas has the same meaning as bee’s knees.

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